

First Returns on CIA Meet a Dissent

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The first returns from the special committee of three appointed by President Johnson to investigate the Central Intelligence Agency's campus spending spree came from John W. Gardner, secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

Gardner, one of the most overworked men in government, said he thought CIA's student activities had been a mistake, but added that he didn't know "any sensible person who believes that this nation can afford to be without a secret intelligence agency."

At about the same moment, a dissenting view was being expressed on Capitol Hill by historian Henry Steele Commager, who said that the growth of secrecy in government had been one of the most disturbing postwar phenomena.

"So much can be done under the cloak of secrecy that is irrevocable," the author of "The American Mind" told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday.

'May Lose Values'

When asked about the CIA in cap and gown, Commager said that while he didn't know much about it because "it isn't vouchsafed us to know very much about it," he thought it could mean that "we may win the contest with the Communists but lose the values we are defending."

"We want the triumph of the open mind," said Commager.

Hitherto the Senate has shown itself something less than concerned with this "triumph." It has forfeited its "right to know" in connection with the intelligence service. It has accepted the burdensome Cold War philosophy that the less said, the better about clandestine operations.

But the revelations that the CIA has been more than ubiquitous may have produced a slightly more inquisitive spirit in the Senate, which has asked no questions about dirty work in Budapest but might feel differently about colleges at home.

That at least is the hope of Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy, D-Minn., who is introducing a resolution creating a committee to look into the CIA's domestic activities.

The President, who was not involved in the initial decision to send the CIA to college, had hoped to forestall such a move on the part of Congress by appointing his own committee. In addition to Gardner, it consists to Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach and CIA Director Richard Helms.

The appointment of Helms caused Chairman J. W. Fulbright of the Senator Foreign Relations Committee to express doubt about the objectivity of the committee's report. He found it comparable to asking Treasury Secretary Henry H. Fowler "to audit the runds of the federal treasury."

But Johnson is always jealous of his prerogatives and has eschewed the clear excuse to step clear of the furor.

McCarthy thinks it would be helpful both to the agency and to the President to have an independent investigation of activities that have proved mortifying to the government at home and abroad.

Always Inquired

One of the more philosophical seantors, he has always inquired, when he got the chance, about the means the CIA has used to achieve its ends.

He led a fight against the appointment John McCone, who succeeded Allan Dulles as

Director, on the grounds that McCone had been opposed to academic freedom. When asked about the means used by the CIA, McCone answered simply, "We will fight communism."

Now that the public knows a little more about the methods used to "fight communism," McCarthy thinks his attempt to call the agency to account may have a better chance.

His last effort to enlarge the "watchdog committee," made up of members of the Armed

Services and Appropriations Committees, all friends of the agency, was overwhelmingly defeated.

Sen. Richard B. Russell D-Ga., chairman of Armed Services, knowing the fight would be made again, permitted three members of the Foreign Relations Committee to come on as watchdogs. But McCarthy thinks it is time to break up "the inner ring" mentality that has prevailed in the Senate's cosy surveillance of the intelligence.

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